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## Japan

### Market Development Reports

### Japan Food Trends March

**2009**

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**Report Highlights:**

Increased stratification seen in the Japanese food market, vegetables become cool again, as well as other Japanese food market trends are covered in this issue.

Japan Food Trends (JFT) communicates Japanese food and lifestyle trends that may help U.S. exporters to generate product and marketing ideas.

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## *Editor's Notes*

Since the beginning of 2009, we've seen a few trends already start to emerge or strengthen. Whiskey, always popular in Japan, has been on the rise again, particularly in sales of U.S. bourbon. Yet while people may be drinking more, their college aged children are feeling the pinch of the hard economic situation. Most students are spending less, and the first area they cut is in food spending. This doesn't seem to faze chef Fujimaki and his ¥3,000 bowls of ramen noodles however. He is selling more of them than ever. Also popular are veggie rich products and a cake made out of sushi.

### Whiskey

**Bourbon as a U.S. product is continuously growing in sales. Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

<http://www.discus.org/>

[http://www.discus.org/pdf/Distilled\\_Spirits\\_Exports\\_Value\\_December2008.pdf](http://www.discus.org/pdf/Distilled_Spirits_Exports_Value_December2008.pdf)

Japan is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest importer of U.S. spirits, much of which is bourbon. U.S. spirit exports to Japan increased 4.3% to \$66.8 million in 2008, which represents over half of the \$119 million industry in Asia. Of this \$66.8 million, \$58.3 million was from bourbon sales. This is a 10.3% increase over 2007. In 2008, total bourbon exports grew by 5.4% to \$752 million. In 2008, bourbon revenue grew to \$1.8 billion, an increase of 5.3% over 2007.

### Student Life

**Students feel pinch, cut back on food costs. The Yomiuri Shimbun. March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090303TDY03303.htm>

As their parents are hit by a worsening economy, many students are cutting the money they spend on food. Average monthly expenses dropped by about 680 yen (close to \$7) to 24,430 yen (comparable to average in 1977). This is due in part to their total allowance dropping by an average of 2,350 yen (around \$23) to 77,580 yen a month (similar to 1986's figure). Many students are simply opting for one less side dish when they are at the cafeteria.

### From the Editor

Even while students and their parents are vying to save every last yen, some people seem undaunted by the current economic recession. This chef below has just opened one of the most expensive ramen shops in Tokyo. While soup noodles generally sell for around \$6, an expensive bowl can be as much as \$15. Shoici Fujimaki is attempting to sell ramen at 6 times the regular price!

### Restaurant to Watch

**One pricey bowl of soup noodles (3,000 Yen ramen shop that is doing surprisingly well). The Japan Times Online. February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fg20090227f1.html>

When ramen chef Shoichi Fujimaki started to feel like a slave to his work, he increased his prices from \$10 to \$15 to discourage customers. When that didn't work, he opened up a new restaurant, *Fujimaki Gekijo* that serves spicy castle ramen at a whopping \$30 per serving. Although he has received mixed reviews, the shop is immensely popular despite the hefty price tag it carries. This is one attempt to create high-end ramen that may work.

Chef Fujimaki prepares his ¥3,000 gourmet ramen. Source: <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090303TDY03303.htm>



### Veggie Trend on the Rise

**CScout Japan Global Trend Research. January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food/>

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20051231f5.html>



On the left is some pumpkin pudding, and on the right are sweet potato cookies.

Source:

[www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food](http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food)



On the left, a slice of tomato cheesecake. On the right, turnip roll cake.

Source:

[www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food](http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food)

Vegetables have slowly been gaining popularity in Japan over the last year or so. What was once considered just a staple of one's diet is now on its way to becoming the highlight of every meal.

Convenience stores everywhere are turning out veggie rich products. Some fit in with regular convenience store fare such as sweet potato flavored cookies or pumpkin pudding. Then there are dried vegetables, veggie chips, and vegetable supplement. Even pastry shops like Patisserie Potager are getting in on the trend, and selling vegetable chocolates, cheesecake, and rolls.

These items are selling quickly too. Perhaps it is the concern over Japan's ever growing waste lines and the rise of metabolic syndrome that has people rushing for these new offerings, even if some of them are just as fattening as the regular versions of the products. It's still a great way to "reintroduce" consumers to vegetables.

## Would You Drink Your Veggies?

**CScout Japan Global Trend Research December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/appetite-for-veggies-continues-soda-suplements-and-more/>



Vegetables are coming back strong, and not just in their solid form. Veggie beverages are all the rage and people are drinking everything from Tomato, a tomato flavored alcoholic beverage, to Yasaider (the Japanese word for vegetable is yasai, and the -ider is from cider, a lemon lime flavored soda), a vegetable flavored soda. Brightly colored mixed veggie juices and yogurts line convenience store walls and super market aisles. It seems as though people are really receptive to the idea of vegetables in their drinks.



On the left are some Vegips, chips made from vegetables, on the right some dried veggies.

Source: <http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/tag/food/>

A bottle of tomato flavored Yasaider.

Source:

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/appetite-for-veggies-continues-soda-suplements-an-more/>

## A Very Fishy Cake

**The Sushi Deco Cake November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/the-sushi-deco-cake/>

<http://ameblo.jp/ssk003/theme-10005300757.html>

[http://www.fukuokabrand.com/cgi-bin/bbs\\_disp.cgi?bbs\\_id=211&page=2](http://www.fukuokabrand.com/cgi-bin/bbs_disp.cgi?bbs_id=211&page=2)



A special Hinamatsuri cake. Source: <http://ameblo.jp/ssk003/theme-10005300757.html>

There is now a Sushi Deco Cake available to order on the internet. One kind is called the Hinamatsuri Sushi Deco Cake. (Hinamatsuri is a Japanese girls festival celebrated on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Many people eat Chirashi-Zushi, a kind of Sushi, on this day.) This cake is designed to include salmon roe, avocado, tuna, and salmon which are popular among young girls.



Moreover, the look of the cake is designed in a cute and colorful way. Colors such as pink are used to attract female consumers rather than their male counterparts. The cakes average about \$50 each, making them a delectable treat for special occasions only.

A few examples of sushi deco cakes. Source:

<http://www.cscoutjapan.com/en/index.php/the-sushi-deco-cake/>